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ABSTRACT

This publication is a detailed guide for both adult basic education program managers and practitioners to the concept of adult literacy provision within an open learning model. It has three major sections. Section 1 investigates the aims and directions common to both open learning and adult basic education. It provides reviews of programs that have incorporated an individualized approach into their learning provision. Section 2 is a practical guide to the operation of an open learning center that considers the details of client access and program development; the recording, monitoring, and evaluation of the learning program; staffing needs; and resourcing levels. Section 3 provides a reading list of 34 books and articles that formed the background reading for the project. They are rated as highly recommended, useful, and if you have time. Synopses are provided for those books and articles with one of the first two ratings. Appendixes include a list of interviewees, interim literacy course matrix, and 16-item bibliography. (YLB)

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A GUIDEBOOK FOR ADULT EDUCATION PROVIDERS

open learning CENTRES & adult literacy

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OPEN LEARNING CENTRES AND ADULT LITERACY

A Guidebook for Adult Education Providers

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and
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PREFACE

PREFACE

This manual was developed as the result of research funding provided from the Commonwealth through the Office of Adult, Community and Further Education and the Office of the State Training Board. The project required the investigation of open learning centres and the role this flexible form of provision plays or could play in the delivery of adult basic education programs. The research proposal recognised three specific outcomes:

- A review of any literature on the use of open learning centres for adult basic education.
- An analysis of the experiences of those involved in such centres in Victoria.
- The production of a manual on this form of delivery for adult literacy practitioners and program managers.

This was undertaken as a joint project by the Outer Eastern College of TAFE and the Mountain District Women's Co-operative. The project steering committee and research officers reflected expertise in and experience of language and literacy program management and delivery and an understanding of the principles and practices of open learning.

When working on a project of this size and intensity, the fresh perspective of interested yet uninvolved people is necessary to keep a project team focused on its objective. The opportunity to work with the highly professional and supportive steering committee was one of the highlights of the project. The regular meetings were invariably a source of direction and encouragement.

During the course of the project, the research officers contacted eighteen providers. While they are representative of the diverse range of adult basic education program profiles, they also illustrate the depth of commitment and expertise to be found in that area. The teachers and co-ordinators we spoke to were conscientious, hard-working and keen to deliver high quality programs to their clients.

How the manual was developed

The process was in three parts:

- The surveying and follow up interviewing of adult literacy and open learning managers and practitioners in Victoria.
- Background reading from Australian and overseas publications that investigate or comment on adult basic education provision and/or open learning centres.
- The synthesis of local experience and wisdom with any useful elements of overseas or interstate experience.

The result is a detailed guide for both adult basic education program managers and practitioners to the concept of adult literacy provision within an open learning model.

It is not a prescriptive recipe to be followed exactly. It is a descriptive account that will allow each program to look at its own facilities, clientele, funding and philosophical direction and make its own informed judgements for the future.

The manual has three major sections:

- An investigation of aims and directions common to both open learning and adult basic education.
- A practical guide to the operation that considers the details of client access and program development, the recording, monitoring and evaluation of the learning program, staffing needs and resourcing levels.
- A reading list that includes many synopses of the books and articles that formed the background reading for the project.

There is national interest in open learning centres and many projects are investigating the programs, materials and experiences. The results of these studies will further inform the users of this manual and may modify some facets of an open learning approach to adult basic education.

THE CONCEPT

1. THE CONCEPT

1.1 GOOD PRACTICE IN OPEN LEARNING CENTRES

The terms "open learning", "open learning centre" and "flexible delivery" have become common currency in many discussions of learning. The problem is that each person has his/her own understanding and application of these terms.

In this manual "open learning centre" is used to describe a self-contained area where the approach to learning may be termed "open". This means that the mode of learning is flexible and depends on clients' needs. This may be one-to-one, small group, individual tuition, or a combination. It may be offered on site or in an individual's chosen environment.

The learning materials are organised for easy access by clients. They may be chiefly print based, but could also include computer based learning and audio/visual materials. Within this centre, use may be made of technology, such as audioconferencing, telematics, computer managed learning and interactive video.

An open learning centre may offer one or several course options, all of which will be available to suit the needs of the learner in terms of access, learning mode and learning content.

By implication, this gives rise to provision and delivery criteria. Learners need to be able to:

- afford the program
- get clear, accurate and prompt information about program availability, access modes and costs
- learn whatever is relevant to their needs, from a single module to a full program
- enrol and exit easily, at almost any working time and from a place of their choice
- receive full credit for prior learning through a process convenient to them
- have recourse to good advice in setting their learning goals, timelines and methods
- learn at times of their choice
- progress at their own rate
- learn at places of their choice

- have quick, convenient recourse to expert tuition
- have convenient access to peers for mutual support and group activities
- receive regular feedback about their learning progress
- have their learning assessed in a way that is convenient and comfortable for them and at a time and place convenient to them

(Based on Aumann 1992)

1.2 GOOD PRACTICE IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

It is important to evaluate whether the principles seen as a model for good practice in open learning centres can dovetail with those established as the basis for an effective adult basic education program. The National Policy on Languages and Literacy defines literacy as follows:

"The ability to read and use written information and to write appropriately in a range of contexts. It is used to develop knowledge and understanding to achieve personal growth and to function effectively in our society. Literacy also includes recognition of numbers and basic mathematical signs and symbols in text. Literacy involves the integration of speaking, listening and critical thinking with reading and writing."

Adults will already have these skills in some measure. They will also bring with them a wide range of experience and knowledge that has produced both immediate and long-term educational and social needs, and goals that they hope to achieve. This background will often be coupled with a history of perceived failure as a literacy learner. Good practice in adult basic education, therefore, needs to address the twin aims of:

- assisting the development of literacy skills
- fostering the client's growth as an active and positive learner

An effective and meaningful adult basic education program will address these issues through:

- activities and resources with purpose and relevance to the client in his/her own social, cultural and vocational context; prior knowledge and skills are emphasised and built upon and learning is recognised as moving from the realm of the known to the unknown
- whole-language learning principles, including the integration of reading, writing, listening, talking and thinking; mathematical survival skills and technology
- negotiation of the curriculum between tutor and client with resultant sharing of the decisions involved in structuring the learning environment; responsibility then becomes largely the domain of the client rather than wholly that of the tutor/teacher

- relevant and appropriate feedback from respected sources, both print and personal; sensitive support and direction then encourage the client to take the learning risks that are a hallmark of a confident, skilled approach to learning

Adult basic education is presently delivered in large organisations, such as TAFE colleges, Adult Migrant Education Services and Council of Adult Education, and in community house providers and the workplace. The specific aims of each program and the way the program is delivered are dependent on the interaction between the management structure, the staff involved in the program and the community served by the program. Adult basic education may stand alone as a separate provision with its own clientele or may be one element of a wider provision. When considering the place of adult basic education within an open learning centre, it is necessary to decide whether the centre will offer adult basic education alone or will provide other programs that lend themselves to flexible delivery.

Rather than competing with existing adult basic education provision, open learning centres are a means of expanding access to those in the community presently excluded for reasons of work or family commitments, distance or disability. Some practitioners also suggest that learning style may be a source of difficulty for some clients. The research, however, tends to suggest otherwise *(Brennan, Clark & Dymock, 1989)*. The issue is not whether face-to-face, teacher-led groups within libraries, colleges or neighbourhood houses are under siege. The value of the provision in these places is unquestioned. Open learning centres would complement existing adult basic education programs by giving a wider choice of learning opportunities to new and existing clients.

1.3 OPEN LEARNING PLUS LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

In Victoria, there are few open learning centres offering language and literacy provision. Currently, some providers have experience of an open learning approach, while others use elements of an open program to enhance more traditional learning modes. There is no open learning centre model operating within a community provider as yet. The programs highlighted in this section have incorporated an individualised approach into their learning provision.

The Adult Migrant Education Services individual learning centres and the open learning centres and workplace delivery in other states, such as Queensland, New South Wales and Tasmania, have published reviews of their programs. Some examples are cited to illustrate the range being considered.

1.3.1 Adult Migrant Education Services

Individual Learning Centre is the term used to cover individual study centres, self-access centres and self-directed learning centres. The reviews of this provision *(Hoadley 1990; MacNeil unpub)* upheld the philosophies of individual learning centres. Hoadley identified several elements that bore directly on the quality of the program:

- adequate assessment of students' language learning improvement
- appropriate learning materials
- clients' confidence in their own learning strategies
- the induction of the client into the program
- the expertise and experience of the teacher
- carefully tailored staff development
- clarity of centre aims and staff roles
- the venue and its layout

The review concluded that the individual learning centre system could be regarded as a viable learning option for students.

1.3.2 Open learning centres in a college environment, eg Learning Skills Centre, Dandenong TAFE, Victoria

In 1991, the literacy unit of the Learning Skills Centre opened an individual learning centre to cater for adult basic education clients. After the initial interview, clients opt for their choice of hours and attendance pattern. The curriculum is negotiated with the client, who has access to teacher support during attendance times. This may be backed up by small group tutorials in specific areas.

The success of the program may be gauged by the fact that individual learning centre work has become part of the English as a second language provision. The number of adult basic education clients using the centre has grown steadily. Elements that have contributed to its success are:

- convenient location and opening times
- good range and creative use of resources
- wide variety of learning options for clients ranging from developing level 2 to level 4 on the Interim Literacy Course Matrix
- hard-working, innovative staff
- careful and thorough record-keeping procedures

1.3.3 Workplace Learning Centre, Containers Packaging, Melbourne *(Report 1992)*

The model provides for the needs of both industry and workers in the realisation of training goals inherent in award restructure. The report emphasised the importance of:

- the establishment of learning groups
- the crucial role of supervisors and area trainers
- careful design of support systems for learners
- development of "plain English" training modules
- flexible delivery, including take-home materials
- individual pacing
- ongoing evaluation of the project

This has been a joint project by Western Metropolitan College of TAFE, Adult Migrant Education Services and the Training Department at Containers.

1.3.4 Outer Eastern College of TAFE, Victoria

This is an example of an organisational approach to open learning incorporated in college planning. Outer Eastern College of TAFE has made a College commitment to "further develop open learning by offering a range of alternative learning modes and flexible program designs at a range of locations" *(Outer Eastern College of TAFE Open Learning Handbook 1989).*

The library area of the new campus at Croydon includes three rooms adjacent to the main space. These increase the flexibility of the library and offer the opportunity for individualised learning provision.

At the Wantirna campus, the Maths Workshop offers flexible entry and exit times and self-paced tuition in basic and advanced mathematics.

Both the Lilydale and Healesville campuses offer open learning options and facilities.

1.3.5 Open learning centres in Queensland

The open learning program in Queensland was implemented to ensure that within such a decentralised state the majority of people could still have access to the resources of major providers. These open learning centres conduct a range of programs from adult basic education through to degree level courses. Gooley, Towers and Dekkers (1991) point to the following factors in the success of the project:

- clearly defined role of the centre co-ordinator
- equipment to facilitate a multi-media delivery
- sharing of resources across providers
- co-operation and support from community, tertiary providers and funding bodies

1.3.6 BHP Slab and Plate Products Division, Port Kembla *(Stocker 1990)*

Adult Migrant Education Services has been operating within the plant for fifteen years, with attendance at the classes within employees' work time. The open learning centre has been introduced to provide a wide range of courses that meet the individual needs and differences of employees, all with clear aims, objectives, curricula and assessment. With $200,000 from the Education Training Foundation, three types of programs have been introduced:

- buffer programs designed for employees who for any reason don't have appropriate entry requirements for another course to bridge the gap between their skills and the proposed course
- support programs for employees enrolled in training/education courses who need extra assistance to maximise their potential
- innovative programs which are designed for employees; such a comprehensive program is dependent upon appropriate staffing and extensive staff development

1.3.7 Workplace Adult Basic Education, Tasmania *(Shipway 1989)*

This particular program within four major employers was established to meet the expressed needs of the workers at the venues. The success of the program was attributed to:

- planning groups of literacy staff, employer and union representatives at each workplace
- teamwork
- energy of the staff involved
- systematic development and organisation of materials
- availability of funding

To consider:

There are some common themes in these examples. The success of an open learning centre seems to be dependent on:

- ☐ innovative and committed staff
- ☐ tailored staff development
- ☐ management support to ensure clear direction
- ☐ adequate funding for establishment and ongoing costs
- ☐ equipment and resources to support a multi-media delivery
- ☐ careful thought given to venue and client group
- ☐ ongoing evaluation and feedback

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PRACTICE

2.1 WHERE WILL THE CENTRE BE?

"Students are given choices of time and place" (Adult Literacy and Basic Education into the 1990s).

2.1.1 Location

The main requirement for an open learning centre seems to be accessibility.

To consider:

- ☐ personal preference of clients
- ☐ relationship with other providers
- ☐ lighting for learning comfort and personal safety
- ☐ ease with which the centre can be found
- ☐ proximity to shops and public transport

The British experience *(Adult Learning Basic Skills Unit Report 1991)* covers learning centres in libraries, schools, community sites and colleges. Each had its own peculiar advantages and disadvantages, linked to other uses of the facility and the needs of the client group it sought to attract. For example, one centre was located in the same building as a youth drop-in centre, which seemed to detract from its perceived adult learning identity. Another, based at a college, experienced very low levels of female students in the evenings due to poor lighting in the car-park area.

A facility close to train, tram or bus routes will attract more students than one sited away from such services. In rural areas, the centre would be better placed in the normal service town for the district so that users could combine shopping and business trips with learning.

It is often difficult to predict an adult literacy client's preference for venue. Some will feel daunted by a college-based centre and prefer, at least initially, to return to education in the less threatening, more home-like atmosphere of a community provider. This may be situated in their own town and provide

the venue for children's playgroups, football club meetings or other day-to-day activities.

In contrast, other clients prefer to travel out of their home area to the relative anonymity of a college. Attending sessions at a college may validate the literacy program in their view, as well as removing them from the possible gaze of their neighbours.

Still others, usually clients who have had few negative experiences of school, feel little anxiety when faced with a larger college facility. They may see adult basic education study as a preparation for mainstream courses they wish eventually to enter.

Some educators argue that the integration of literacy classes into the course structure of the college reduces the marginalisation of basic education and places it firmly beside other courses in its inherent value. On the other hand, the presence of college-staffed computer or VCE classes within a community provider may tend to raise its profile in the community and enhance the perceived value of its literacy provision for some clients. The lines delineating community and college provision become blurred and the issue becomes the availability of a suitable program, not its venue.

Work, family commitments and problems of travelling have been disqualifying factors for many potential clients. To cater for these clients, a centre will need to offer increased hours of access.

Shift workers and people with pre-school and school-aged children often find that the traditional class times are inconvenient.

Many clients would prefer to negotiate their weekly commitment of hours to a literacy course to suit their own needs.

Clients already enrolled in other classes would often value the opportunity of complementing their course work with extra specific skill practice.

To cater for these clients, a centre will need to offer increased hours of access than are currently available. The ideal of twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week is possibly unrealistic as well as entailing security and staffing issues. However, it may be possible for some parts of the centre to operate in this way as is the case in Queensland. It is not unrealistic, however, to consider opening at 8.00 am and continuing until 9.00 or 10.00 pm on at least some evenings during the week. Weekend provision of 9.00 am to 5.00 pm on either Saturday or Sunday may be considered.

2. PRACTICE

A smaller facility with limited space and competing demands, such as a community provider, may decide to open on some specific days each week, giving local residents a choice of times and attendance hours to replace or complement the traditional two-hour or three-hour class.

To consider:

- ☐ demography of the client group
- ☐ availability of child care
- ☐ security
- ☐ staffing
- ☐ combinations of weekend and evening provision
- ☐ twenty-four hour access
- ☐ other courses and classes available at the provider
- ☐ negotiated hours with individuals and classes

2.1.2 Physical space

If the move to more flexible learning is seen as part of a limited change in or an extra to the existing delivery, then a careful and deliberate review of space will need to be undertaken.

To consider:

- ☐ floor space and size of area
- ☐ furniture
- ☐ storage of audio/visual material
- ☐ placement of computer terminals and audio/visual equipment
- ☐ a separate space for conducting interviews
- ☐ storage of resources
- ☐ display area for resources
- ☐ access to existing facilities such as telephone, tea/coffee making, toilets
- ☐ small group work area
- ☐ individual study room
- ☐ lighting
- ☐ atmosphere
- ☐ display area
- ☐ comfort
- ☐ security
- ☐ administration area

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A lot of discussion and research centres on the needs of the physical space. In the UK *(Adult Learning Basic Skills Unit Report 1991)* a "positive and thoughtful approach to centre layout" was stressed because "a welcoming and professional atmosphere (that) appears to have aided student motivation".

Centres tried to provide:

- a quiet area for individual work
- space where small groups could meet or tutorials take place
- large areas for group meetings
- a reception area and space for socialising

Currently in Victoria within community providers, such space would be a luxury. Therefore, for those providers rearranging an existing space, a room or rooms can be viewed as filling multiple roles. For example, a library area may also house the computer terminals, or a small group work area may double as an informal meeting area. A small room for conducting initial interviews and perhaps review consultations would be desirable. Space for the storage and display of the organised resources can usually be creatively addressed with the usage of many existing features such as filing cabinets, open book shelves and hanging space.

Ideally space suitable for use as an open learning centre is planned and organised from a building's inception. The Croydon campus of Outer Eastern College of TAFE has three large, well-lit rooms off the Learning Resource Centre (library) that are multi-functional. Open access computing facilities are also available within the computing area of the campus. Within the proposed Health, Social and Community Studies Centre, a large self-access room will provide a range of learning materials and resources for clients to use individually. Consequently, both subject specific and multi-purpose spaces will be available at this site.

Irrespective of new or existing space, each open learning centre needs to develop in response to an overall strategic plan for its future. Premises, number of staff, clients, resources and varied types of activities provide the guiding consideration for organising the physical space, whether it be in industry, community or large educational providers.

2.2 HOW WILL IT BE STAFFED?

"Open learning changes the role of a teacher from a source of knowledge to a manager and facilitator of learning and the learning environment" (Johnson 1990).

2.2.1 Staffing profile

Personal qualities of a good teacher in an open learning centre are:

- the ability to enthuse and encourage
- pronounced flexibility
- the ability to accept, respect and relate positively to all client groups
- the ability to recognise and develop the client's prior knowledge
- a healthy sense of humour

Professional qualities of a good teacher in an open learning centre are:

- the ability to manage learning rather than "standing and delivering"
- the ability to act as a learning resource for adult learning
- familiarity with theories of adult learning
- the skills and knowledge for developing suitable learning materials for meeting client needs
- the skills and knowledge related to the assessment of the degree of learning and competence
- resource consciousness

The balance of staffing at each centre will depend largely on centre and overall provider policy and funding.

To consider:

The implications of:

- ☐ the role of the co-ordinator
- ☐ the role of the teachers/tutors
- ☐ the role of a committee of management
- ☐ conditions of employment, including retention and continuity of staff
- ☐ administrative assistance
- ☐ the use of volunteers
- ☐ who provides professional development

The role of the co-ordinator:

- development and implementation of the concept
- liaison with staff and often network and industry
- supervision of staff
- identification of client groups
- targeting of clients
- counselling
- administration and record keeping
- organisation of professional development

Within some centres the role extends to include:

- needs analysis
- learning problem diagnosis of particular clients
- housekeeping (where there is limited clerical assistance)
- general teaching duties

The role of the teacher:

- clarifying learners' needs
- planning study and time lines
- motivating students initially and on an ongoing basis
- providing expertise
- diagnosing learning problems and weaknesses
- assessing students' needs and gains
- setting up support structures
- teaching small groups
- helping students access other services such as libraries and career counsellors
- preparing materials

The role of volunteers:

- assisting with materials preparation
- performing administrative functions
- supporting students
- 1:1 tutoring
- hearing reading
- supporting special needs students
- helping with specific skills

For a centre to operate smoothly, there needs to be a sense of co-operation between co-ordinators and other staff where everybody shares responsibilities and works closely together as a team. As well as staff fulfilling their assigned roles, the success of an open learning centre depends on all staff:

- having role expectations which are consistent with those of other staff, the co-ordinator and the centre
- being serious about, and committed to, the specific job and centre
- possessing a range of alternative teaching and learning strategies plus the confidence to present them
- having the ingenuity to adapt and develop materials
- being able to teach without the usual cues a teacher receives within a classroom
- coping with the greater flexibility of the centre, such as clients entering and exiting at any time
- keeping up to date with current educational developments and thinking

2.2.2 Communication

It can be more difficult within an open learning centre than in traditional classes for everyone to know what other staff and clients are doing. Furthermore, it is also more important.

The ways staff and clients can liaise with each other depend on the purpose of the communication. Therefore, a variety of means needs to be developed to keep all lines as open and as two way as possible.

Within the open learning centre, these means are provided by:

- informal meetings
- folders/files
- mail
- telephone
- arranged meetings as necessary
- regular timetabled meetings
- computer link-up
- audioconferencing
- notice-boards
- consultative group meetings
- day book
- social get-togethers

Meeting and exchanging ideas between staff, and staff and clients, has educational benefits, but meeting in a social, informal setting has personal benefits. The advantage of developing a trusting relationship between all parties is obvious.

While the values of learning and working independently are the rationale of the open learning centre, any remoteness or feeling of not belonging will affect the value of the learning experience and its associated feedback.

However, if staff and co-ordinators have an obvious physical presence at the centre, these feelings can be counteracted. The clients can identify a staff member with whom they can share problems and air grievances.

Effective communication within an open learning centre ensures:

- the smooth operation of the centre
- the ongoing compilation of clients' and teachers' assessments of materials and programs
- the minimising of feelings of isolation and separateness
- the exchanging of ideas
- learner support
- the development of personal and professional rapport between teachers and clients
- the sharing of ideas, problems, strategies, resources and materials
- the provision of the feedback necessary to evaluate the quality and appropriateness of the learning experience and the material
- the provision of assistance where and when needed
- the planning of adequate and recurrent funding

2.2.3 Staff development

Centre co-ordinators, program managers, tutors/teachers and volunteers need to be involved in regular specific staff development.

The benefits of good staff development are obvious to adult basic education providers. Within an open learning centre, however, regular tailored staff development needs to be provided to keep staff up to date with the concerns specific to adult basic education within an open learning centre.

To consider:

- ☐ adequate time release
- ☐ financial support

Tailored staff development can include:

- adult learner issues, such as recognition of prior learning
- adult literacy and numeracy within an open learning centre
- competency-based training
- the role of the teacher in an open learning centre
- utilising new technology
- instructional design skills

Some staff development options:

- reading professional publications
- attending conferences
- centre-run meetings
- network meetings
- tutor training
- guest speakers
- visits to other open learning centres
- completing further education
- handbook
- staff interaction
- access to short courses
- contributing to professional publications
- workshops, internal and co-operative

2.3 WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE NEEDED?

"Open learning seeks to provide clients with as much choice and control as possible over ..... learning resources" (Johnson 1990).

2.3.1 Multi-media resources

The extent to which technology is used depends on the centre, its program and the staff. This was reflected in the responses to the questionnaire. While many adult basic education programs operate successfully without sophisticated electronic or computer equipment, learning within an open learning centre is made more manageable with it.

The following chart is not prescriptive, but gives an idea of a developing level of sophistication in materials and technology.

PRINT BASED	AUDIO/VISUAL	COMPUTER BASED	INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY
Text books	Experiential learning materials	Word processing packages	Telephone
Worksheets	Cassettes/ cassette players	Computer based learning	Fax
Photocopier	Videos/VCRs	Spreadsheet packages	Audio conference
Instructional manuals	Television	Computer managed learning	Interactive video disc
			Video conference

To consider:

- ☐ clients returning to the learning or work environment may be unfamiliar with new technology; however, to aid them to find a niche in the current work force, access to this equipment and skills is important
- ☐ clear instructions and technical support need to be readily available to enable clients to access computer technology confidently and easily

Providers should not lose sight of good practice, however. No amount of elaborate equipment will make poor or inappropriate materials worthwhile, nor should adult basic education be taught without any human interaction.

To consider:

- ☐ building in human contact
- ☐ appropriate induction and training of teachers and clients
- ☐ careful selection of software
- ☐ obtaining regular feedback
- ☐ staff and learners' attitudes to technology
- ☐ technical breakdowns

2.3.2 Organising and choosing materials

Interviewees suggest the following guidelines for assessing material suitable for use in an open learning centre:

- material is totally unambiguous
- material is polished and correct
- there is a great variety
- material uses adults' knowledge and experience
- software is readable
- software is user friendly
- material is stimulating
- material is paced and self-correcting
- language and graphics are combined
- the material comes as close as possible to engaging clients in a running dialogue
- print based material is portable, inexpensive, more widely available and requires no specialised equipment
- other media, such as computer or video, can provide automatic diagnosis and feedback

Clients should be able to access the material without direct supervision. Materials should be:

- clearly marked with an overall strategy that all clients can understand and use
- organised with an awareness of the special needs of some clients, such as low literacy skills, colour blindness, sight impairment
- displayed with directions for thematic linking of materials
- cross referenced

- provided with study guides for each set
- displayed in appropriate ways, such as:
  - on shelves
  - on trolleys
  - in ring binders
  - in plastic wallets
  - in files

To consider:

When developing new material:

- ☐ program development needs to be done before the program starts
- ☐ time needs to be allocated for teachers to develop new materials
- ☐ development of materials takes skill, expertise and ingenuity
- ☐ the balance of materials with reference to the accreditation frameworks
- ☐ co-ordinated pooling of resources with other providers
- ☐ materials devised commercially or in other centres can be used if checked and adapted where necessary
- ☐ suitability of resources, specifically for open learning
- ☐ the need for ongoing evaluation and revision of all materials used
- ☐ materials should reflect different cultural aspects of centre users
- ☐ encouragement of the integration of text and computer based material

2.4 HOW WILL THE CENTRE BE USED?

"Open learning seeks to provide clients with as much choice and control over learning strategies as possible" (Johnson 1990).

One of the hallmarks of an open learning centre is flexibility in the learning mode. Clients, in negotiation with the program manager, decide on the level of individual learning and/or small group work that is appropriate for their needs.

To consider:

- ☐ the type of provision currently offered
- ☐ the skill level of the clients
- ☐ the provision of opportunities for clients to develop independent learning strategies
- ☐ how to monitor self-assessment and evaluate independent learning
- ☐ who chooses resources
- ☐ how resources are chosen
- ☐ the possibility of mixing modes of provision
- ☐ the degree of teacher support required and available
- ☐ the use of home learning packages
- ☐ the use of volunteers

2.4.1 Learning mode

Almost every class course includes assignment work undertaken by the client with the support of the teacher. Some programs, for example for Commonwealth Employment Service clients at Dandenong TAFE, devote a block of time each week to **supported self-study** when the client uses a range of resources to practise particular skill areas. This still involves support and guidance from the teacher, although the pace and perhaps the content of the work can be determined by the client.

The next step is for clients with a reasonable degree of learning confidence (although not necessarily skill) to move towards spending more of their learning time within a supported self-study framework. This is becoming a larger part of the provision at some community providers, such as Emerald. For this to succeed, however, the client may need help in goal setting and alternative learning strategies.

The degree of self-assessment and regular evaluation would need to be monitored consistently by the teacher responsible for that client.

The pace and content of the work would be the domain of the client, although negotiation with and direction from the teacher could be a factor.

The choice of resources, also, would probably be the result of negotiation between client and teacher. These may be identified at a regular review meeting with a specific teacher-contact, with the client responsible for their subsequent location and use. Resources may also be identified in a client work file to be located as necessary by the teacher on duty in the centre, who would have the responsibility of providing immediate feedback and support for the client as necessary.

Teacher support: The amount and kind required will vary with the clients, their level of independence and the nature of their learning. Sensitive feedback, encouragement, direction and co-operative evaluation will all be part of the teacher's role in this supported self-study setting. Short bursts of on-the-spot teaching to clear a problem area may also be required.

Although the main part of the work would be individual, several students working towards similar ends may meet regularly for short term sessions or tutorials in specific areas, such as paragraphing skills, essay writing conventions, fractions, discussion groups.

The extension to take-home learning packages and resources (print based, audio/visual, or computer based) is a further development of the "open" principle. These resources need to be designed to be self supporting, but

they also need to be appropriate for the skill level and needs of the particular student. This may be easier to achieve at the upper end of the literacy matrix but will also depend on the nature of the study undertaken.

At the "open" end of the learning scale, a successful, confident learner might be expected to be capable of deciding on a course of study and undertaking that work with little help or guidance from a teacher. Regular self and teacher or computer based assessment and evaluation of the program would still be expected as part of the provision.

2.4.2 Assessment

The initial assessment of clients is critical to their placement in a program that is appropriate in meeting their identified needs. Good practice dictates that literacy practitioners do not indiscriminately enrol all who apply to join a program. The same applies with a flexible delivery program within an open learning centre.

To consider:

- ☐ clients' preference
- ☐ clients' competence, educational and vocational backgrounds
- ☐ induction to facilities and organisation of resources
- ☐ staff input
- ☐ the process of negotiation
- ☐ the conducting and recording of the initial interview
- ☐ meeting other students
- ☐ educational and training counselling and information

A supported self-study mode would probably be inappropriate for clients at level 1 on the Literacy Matrix. They would need the ongoing support of a small class, with a skilled teacher gently leading them through the initial stages of literacy competency. These clients would probably lack the confidence and learning strategies to organise and undertake their own study.

The same may also be true of clients assessed at a higher level on the Literacy Matrix. Their lack of confidence may demand the structure and support of a class. An identifiable teacher and peer group support may be necessary ingredients of their learning pathway. There will come a time, however, when these clients are ready to move to a more independent mode of learning and will need to be directed towards such provision.

The usual elements of an initial interview for an adult literacy client cover an assessment of their literacy, oracy and perhaps numeracy skills. The client's educational and vocational backgrounds, plans and hopes for the future and any other pieces of incidental information that may be helpful are also accurately recorded.

The additional elements to an interview at an open learning centre would include:

- deciding the kind of delivery that would be most effective for this client
- outlining alternatives available
- discussing implications of the mode of study
- deciding between supported self-study/class or self-study alone
- explaining clearly the available modes
- setting a time for a further appointment for an induction session/post-interview visit should the client opt for flexible attendance times
- beginning to negotiate the curriculum

2.4.3 Beginning open learning

The client's first visit can fill many roles. It can be:

- an acclimatising visit
- a meeting with the teacher designated as a teacher contact/learning counsellor
- a more specific interview to formalise initial learning goals and strategies with suggested starting points
- an explanation and practical session with the organisation of the materials in the centre
- an opportunity to be introduced to the recording procedures
- a guided tour of the centre
- a chance to meet and talk with other clients

2.4.4 Recording, monitoring and evaluating

The administrative systems required for an open learning centre are only slightly different from those required in a more conventional provision. The difference lies in the fact that, instead of being kept by individual teachers, they are centrally organised and located. Therefore, it is important that:

- they are user friendly
- they are available, complete and easy to understand whenever needed

Because of the increased numbers of staff and clients using the centre, there needs to be a deliberate attempt to rationalise paperwork.

Types of records are:

- client's personal details
- record of interview
- learning goals
- attendance record
- study record
- progress details
- assessment details

In a confidential file, perhaps the personal details, record of interview and teacher assessment could be kept, available to staff and the individual client.

In a working file, the learning goals, study record and self assessment may be kept. The client needs to be involved in the day-to-day keeping of work records, which include not just the name of resources used and the part covered, but some idea of the client's level of ease with the material and judgement of its value. The working file can become a valuable dialogue tool between client and teacher, rather than just a litany of names of resources.

To consider:

- ☐ organisation of records
- ☐ use of technology for record-keeping
- ☐ attendance
- ☐ client involvement in recording progress
- ☐ obtaining feedback
- ☐ reviewing feedback

An attendance log recording expected times of attendance and actual attendance days and hours could become a central record, with access for both staff and clients. There are computer programs available to accomplish this with clients needing only to log on and off. Attendance records will be necessary for in-house and administrative reasons. They provide statistics of centre use and the opportunity to identify and follow up missing students.

Feedback from clients on the value of the learning materials: Resources need to be evaluated for their use for different levels and types of client. This is often achieved informally during the teacher support process of each session. The opportunity to formalise what may otherwise be a random process needs to be provided. A comment sheet with suggested headings for comment could be kept in the front or back of the client's working file or the resource.

Regular review meetings between client and contact teacher are needed to ensure that the client is at least contributing to the direction of future work. There seem to be two options:

- negotiation between the client and contact teacher on the frequency of review meetings

  or

- a centre policy that sets down the timing of review meetings

In the early stages, help also may be needed for a student to make the most effective use of the working file records.

Monitoring of client progress can be by means of the review sessions and working file. Once a system of credit transfer is delineated, supportive evidence of progress towards a qualification or competence in a particular learning task can also be utilised. The Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework and the Assessment Referral and Placement Kit are mechanisms that can be used as monitoring devices by the teacher and adapted for client use. They have the potential to be built in to the working file, if appropriate, to act as a mechanism for both planning and assessment. In fact, both the Framework and the Kit are becoming standard reporting and monitoring devices within adult basic education programs.

Evaluating the quality of the provision: The interview and the recording and monitoring of progress provide the raw data. The number of clients who enrol and continue attending until their goals are reached and then move on is usually a reliable guide to the effectiveness of the program. It may, however, give little idea of the efficiency of the provision. Consistent with current good practice, staff feedback and formal evaluation by the clients during their course and on exit can provide more useful data in this area. The actual design and administration of such evaluation tools need to be carefully considered in light of the information required rather than of the expected responses.

Since all are stakeholders, with a genuine interest in and concern for the quality of the program, all responses can be valued and made the subject of ongoing planning meetings.

2.4.5 Entry and exit points

Individual learning allows for entry to and exit from the program at any time with little or no disruption to continuing clients.

To consider:

- ☐ implications for record keeping, ie who keeps them, what kind
- ☐ the use of mentors
- ☐ catering for specific learning goals
- ☐ award restructuring and the process of notifying employers of courses completed
- ☐ administration
- ☐ credit transfers between providers

Open learning provides an opportunity for clients to move from quite a basic level toward their aim of more complex literacy competencies, within or irrespective of the same venue.

To consider:

- ☐ available learning pathways
- ☐ credit transfers within the provider

Offering individual or supported self-study options and increasing the hours of centre opening will result in a wider range of clients with varying needs being able to access resources.

Traditionally, clients have been tied to set enrolment times. The class may be short term or ongoing, although clients do tend to leave the class when it suits them. If they re-enrol for the following semester, the teacher faces a mix of new and returning clients with the consequent necessity of covering the basic ground with the new while providing other work for the old clients.

Individual learning allows for entry and exit at any time with little or no disruption to existing clients. In fact, experienced clients are often able to act as mentors for new arrivals in the acclimatising process, providing further encouragement and a welcoming focus.

This kind of system also allows for clients who are studying towards a specific short-term goal such as an entry exam to the police force or State Enrolled Nursing training. They may attend for short periods, possibly for long hours during those periods, working on the specific areas that need attention.

Other clients may choose to work on only one area of skills, for example study skills, essay writing or higher comprehension skills, to enable them to complete successfully a course undertaken elsewhere or by distance learning. These clients will exit when their goal is achieved, whether that be in three weeks or thirty.

2.4.6 Pathways

Adult literacy practitioners see part of their role as helping clients to plan and develop learning pathways. The realisation of their long-term educational and vocational goals will probably lie at the end of that pathway.

The design and negotiation of the learning pathway will typically begin at the initial interview. Regular review and consultation with the teacher may result in adjustment or total change over a period of time.

Clients in an open learning centre need access to expert information and counselling about educational and training courses and their entry requirements, if they are to make informed choices about the future. The special advice of a trained career counsellor may become necessary as clients reach important decision-making stages or learning crossroads.

The implementation of the Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework should be accompanied by the mechanism of credit transfer, at least among literacy providers. A client will thus be able to move from one program to another, if necessary, losing none of the benefits of previous study.

Administrative processes within and between educational organisations need to be streamlined to allow flexibility and expediency for client movement between courses and providers.

With more flexible delivery, the consideration of whether there are enough students to run a particular class in any particular semester is no longer relevant. The pathways available for students at the moment are still valid within flexible learning provision, with the added bonus of increased experience and confidence in the client of goal setting and independent learning.

2.5 WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO KNOW?

"Well resourced basic skills centres, open for a large number of hours per week and in many cases throughout the year, have changed attitudes to post-school education" (Adult Learning Basic Skills Unit 1992).

2.5.1 The overall picture

After reading the checklists and discussions of the preceding pages, it may be useful to see the options summarised. Therefore, Lewis' model *(Lewis & MacDonald 1988)* provides a clear view of the overall picture of the range of possibilities in learning provision in an open learning centre.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL LEARNERS NEED?	Information	Advice	Motivation	Counselling	Guidance
		Tutoring	Feedback	Study Skills	Equipment

After	End	During	On joining	Before	WHEN WILL LEARNERS NEED SUPPORT?

HOW WILL THEY GET THIS SUPPORT?	Physical	People	Packages	Technology

"The Open Learning Pocket Workbook"
by Roger Lewis with Lesley MacDonald

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ASPECT	SCALE OF OPENNESS
Content, aims and objectives	1. No choice 2. Narrow choice inside specified curriculum 3. Wide choice inside specified curriculum 4. Negotiable outside specified curriculum
Learning methods	1. Formal classes, closely defined practical activities 2. Formal activities supplemented by flexible tutorials and seminars 3. Some formal classes, but wide range of informal activities 4. "Open-ended" practical, project and other activities
Access to tutorial support	1. Correspondence support only 2. Access in person or by telephone at planned times 3. Planned meetings with flexible access by telephone 4. Flexible access in person or by telephone
Work experience	1. None 2. Some within college simulations 3. Some short work placements 4. Ample work placements
Starting date	1. Fixed 2. Narrow choice 3. Wide choice 4. Free choice
Attendance pattern	1. Weekly or more frequent meetings 2. Occasional group meetings 3. Individual meetings with tutors 4. None
Assessment pattern	1. Annual 2. Several times per year 3. On demand 4. None

ASPECT	SCALE OF OPENNESS
Entry requirements	1. Rigid pattern of formal qualifications 2. Flexible range of formal qualifications 3. Evidence of maturity and appropriate experience 4. None
Learning resources	1. Only resources are notes taken in class 2. Handouts and/or textbook references 3. Learning packages of print material 4. Packages supplemented by "technology"
Practical activities	1. None 2. Normal laboratory or workshop activities 3. Flexible laboratory or workshop 4. Practical activities out of college
Group work	1. None 2. Little group work under close teacher control 3. Frequent loosely structured group work with ready access to teachers 4. Much group work with little teacher intervention
Finishing date	1. Fixed 2. Limited choice of assessment date 3. Wide choice of assessment 4. Free choice
Assessment methods	1. Fixed patterns for conventional examinations and tests 2. Limited choice of standard methods 3. Negotiable "demonstrations of achievements"

"The Open Learning Pocket Workbook"
by Roger Lewis with Lesley MacDonald

2.5.2 Networking

Within an open learning centre, co-ordinated sharing of human and material resources makes sense both on a small scale between teachers and co-ordinators and on a larger scale through regional networks, networks of mini-centres and satellite centres, or open learning consortia.

To share:

- resources
- ideas
- software
- specialist staff
- equipment
- support
- staff development
- materials development
- materials evaluation

To consider:

- ☐ clearing houses
- ☐ network meetings
- ☐ pick up/delivery of equipment
- ☐ security
- ☐ attitudes of other providers
- ☐ open learning consortia

2.5.3 Marketing

Marketing a program within an open learning setting is similar to marketing any other program, although the differences in the provision may need to be a focal point of explanation. The special features of an open learning centre, therefore, need to be promoted.

The process:

- identify client group and its concerns
- make marketing specific to target group
- make initial marketing different

This marketing process can apply equally to any group which is unfamiliar with open learning centres, such as funding bodies, colleagues and employers, as well as learners.

Some initial marketing strategies suggested by providers:

- launch activities
- open/information days
- brochures
- press releases
- direct mail
- seminars
- liaison with employer organisations
- local paper advertisements
- community noticeboards
- liaison with community organisations
- word of mouth

2.5.4 Budget allocation

"In any business venture, it is normal to capitalise it first and provide any infrastructure that may be necessary to make it work" (Davies 1989).

Infrastructure costs include both non-recurring and recurring elements. This section attempts to give guidelines for the latter category, which basically are the costs of organising and administering the centre - the running expenses. These can be broken up into:

- staffing
  - staff ratios and balance
  - co-ordination/management
  - teaching
  - reception/administration
  - staff development
- resources maintenance and extension
- program development
- overheads

Even a rough breakdown of the percentage costs in these areas is difficult as each venue will see its present needs and growth pattern quite differently.

When a strategic plan for the development of a flexible learning facility is prepared, an assessment of the place of each of the above elements within the whole needs to be ensured. The temptation to transfer existing budgets only and their proportional elements to the new facility needs to be resisted. Teaching and co-ordination salaries and overheads will tend to account for the bulk, with only minimal amounts left for resources and probably none for program development, which needs a high priority in the profile of a flexible learning centre.

Staff development varies widely in the way it is addressed for community house staff, industry and TAFE teachers, only some of whom have this time built into an award. Adult literacy practitioners in community venues sometimes find that limited funds and co-ordination time result in staff development being dependent on the ingenuity and entrepreneurial skills of the program co-ordinator. Whatever the option, staff development for those working in a flexible delivery environment needs to include time for addressing the issues inherent in the venue.

The provision of reception/administrative support is often put into the too expensive, and probably not necessary, basket until the obvious need is matched by extra funding and yet, as has been shown from Queensland, Outer Eastern College of TAFE (Lilydale and Healesville) and some Canadian experience, can be critical.

For a centre to develop along less than a crisis management pathway, the initial establishment guidelines need to build in the needs for the projected costs of increasing the variety and suitability of resources and hardware. The ongoing need in terms of program development may need to be considered as part of a teacher's load.

In balancing the budget, the information and support of other program managers and funding bodies is critical.

2.5.5 Cost effectiveness

The studies and reports referred to in the bibliography make no clear claims of cost efficiency or cost effectiveness. They are, however, optimistic that these will be proved in the long term. Much of the research is into the cost efficiency and effectiveness of distance education, compared with traditional face-to-face modes. This can be looked at as a background to a discussion of adult basic education in an open learning facility. The comments in this section are not intended to be definitive, but to act as a discussion framework for future detailed investigation.

Definitions

Cost can be divided into two main areas:

- **Fixed costs** of the program in new, renovated or existing premises. These are considered fixed, as they do not vary with the volume of clients enrolling. Factors such as program development, initial production and supply of course materials, equipment and multi-media resources and staffing contribute to this area *(Telecottages - Department of Primary Industries and Energy, 1991).*

  Some cost areas will be recurrent while others will cease after an initial injection of funds.

- **Variable costs** vary directly with the volume of students enrolling: duplication of resource materials, other consumables and further staffing.

  Tied to this is the fact that after a particular level of client enrolment, extra facilities, staff and equipment become necessary. A strategic development plan for the provision will take account of these factors and balance them to achieve cost-efficiency.

Cost efficiency relates to the quantity of learning achieved per dollar spent on the program. **Cost effectiveness**, however, is concerned with the quality of the learning.

Measurements of cost-efficiency, formulae and computer programs for determining the solution to the equation abound. Therefore this discussion will be restricted to the possibility of delivering cost-effective programs in adult basic education within an open learning centre.

Learning may be looked at in three broad areas:

- the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills
- the development of attitudes, values and interests
- the development of manipulative or motor skills

If a cost-efficient investment returns a poor or inadequate learning product, then it is not effective.

"Open learning is not intrinsically cheaper nor more expensive than other approaches to education, but it produces better results." *(Johnson 1990)*

How does one measure cost effectiveness?

- **Relative to traditional delivery**

  This may be inappropriate if clients will not or cannot learn via traditional methods, eg one literacy practitioner interviewed had a total budget allocation of $5,000 for the year (including his tutor salary fraction). He stated that, if as a result of increased literacy skills just one client moved from unemployment benefits to full-time work, his program was very cost effective. If we measure this against the traditional delivery model, assuming fifty hours of one-to-one contact, this would equate to $100 per student contact hour, which is a very high cost.

- **Cost/benefit to the community**

  Ultimately this is what determines funding levels. Governments and their agencies make decisions as to how much public money will be allocated to specific educational and geographic areas. Generally this is based on an amount per student contact hour or program hour, with minimum student numbers per program.

  To ensure cost effectiveness, these grants are generally compared with actual enrolment numbers and yet very little measurement of attrition rates or quality of the learning process is taken into account.

Open learning allows very effective use of funds if:

- clients are assisted in moving from teacher-directed to independent learning
- flexible entry and exit points are 'built in' allowing rolling enrolments, thus fully utilising the centre's resources
- quality of the learning process is evaluated and action taken to optimise it on a continual basis
- resource material is of high quality
- usage of learning centres is high

It will be apparent that, for many open learning centres, one of the important ingredients for cost effectiveness will be the provision of a wide range of programs so that the centre can be fully utilised. Apart from providing educational pathways for clients, this simple factor will allow for efficient use of staff and resources.

Any analysis of costing shows that staffing is **the major component**. In general adults are capable of learning fairly independently, although it is recognised that, at the basic level, a greater amount of teacher support is required.

Therefore, to achieve cost efficiency, learning centres need to be structured in such a way as to enable students to receive adequate teacher support, but to move towards mostly autonomous learning as they progress along their educational pathways.

Cost effective educational outcomes may be difficult to measure because the curriculum is negotiated in response to client needs. Clients enrol in adult basic education courses for a multitude of reasons: the intensely personal, such as helping children with homework or to feel more confident in their daily lives, through to specific vocational goals, such as passing an entrance exam or gaining promotion at work. These goals may change during their study.

Unlike mainstream courses, there may be no achievement that marks subjects passed and course completed. Even with the implementation of the Adult Basic Education Curriculum Framework, clients may opt to complete what amounts to only parts up to level 4. The stated aims of the client on enrolment may be the most realistic means of gauging this measure of program effectiveness.

To consider:

- ☐ increased opening hours and negotiated attendance patterns will provide learning opportunities for more clients
- ☐ potential exists for ongoing full usage of a centre as new enrolments replace exit students
- ☐ flexible delivery modes can increase the effectiveness of learning for many clients
- ☐ individual client goals can be met more quickly and efficiently
- ☐ good quality materials are in short supply and will need to be developed
- ☐ initial costs of multi-media resources to support open learning strategies are high
- ☐ staff development for policy makers, teachers, administrators, counsellors, librarians and support staff will be critical for effective implementation
- ☐ available funding and its implications for staffing levels may determine the profile of the clients who can be enrolled

READING LIST AND SYNOPSES

3. READING LIST AND SYNOPSES

In our view: *** Highly recommended
** Useful
* If you have time

Adult Migrant Education Services, Containers Packaging and the Victorian Education Foundation (1992), *The Establishment of the Workplace Learning Centre at Containers Packaging*, Report by C Virgona. **

The Workplace Learning Centre model developed from a study into the award restructure training needs of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds. The model includes different learning environments for trainees and a range of training media. It focuses on "the development of transferable skills and independent learning skills."

"An underlying assumption of the Model is that English language and literacy training must be embedded within the mainstream training program of industry."

The program offered by the centre was directed at the delivery of the Engineering Production Certificate. Trainees, trainers and teachers met regularly to devise delivery modes suitable for the learning syndicates. Take-home materials were also devised for workers who were unable to participate in the centre training program due to the pressure of numbers and lower level literacy skills.

The report is specific in that it describes and analyses the experiences at Containers. It is, however, also general in that it looks at the process of implementing the Workplace Learning Centre model elsewhere. The evaluation of the particular enterprise is followed by a section that identifies the steps inherent in establishing such a centre elsewhere.

ALBSU The Basic Skills Unit (1991), *Open Learning Centres in England and Wales.* ***

An indispensable guide to the issues that we in Australia face when tackling the complexities of providing open access to adult basic education clients. Basic skills open learning centres were heavily funded in Britain in early 1988. This report examines and details the issues inherent in their establishment and operation.

"Centres were intended to develop and innovate rather than replicate existing basic skills practices." They had to develop new approaches and systems for: interviewing, record keeping, assessment and monitoring.

ALBSU The Basic Skills Unit (1991), *Open Learning & ESOL.* ***

Although this booklet concentrates on open provision in an ESOL context, it is useful in general terms to adult literacy practitioners. The first section deals with "Negotiating a Work Program", taking a teacher through the steps involved in: building a picture of the student, translating the student's aims into realistic and relevant learning goals, negotiating a program of work related to these goals and reviewing progress. The second part focuses on the practical aspects of making open learning work: the role of the tutor, monitoring the provision, the possibilities for beginning students.

"..... open learning implies flexibility to respond to needs as they arise and not rigidly sticking to a syllabus."
The authors conclude that, with motivation and an ability to work alone, all students can benefit from open learning. They should also be encouraged to participate in group activities for support and social interaction. Open learning methods can also be used in group teaching for part of class time.

"The tutor ensures that quality (of the learning process) by relating it to the special and specific needs of an individual student and at the same time supporting, validating and guiding that learning."

ALBSU The Basic Skills Unit (1992), *Organising Resources in Open Learning.* *

Andrews, V (1992), *Round Pegs in Square Holes? An Appraisal of ABE in Open Learning Programmes*, RaPAL Bulletin, Britain, no 18. ***

The author researched a sample of open learning centres in England and her work led her to question the value of such centres to the traditional literacy client. Indispensable aspects of "good practice" were being overlooked in favour of the goal of fully independent students. Her concerns were in the areas of: confusion over the role of the tutor, the choice of learning materials, their methods of and the support for their use, expectations of and support for students, continual monitoring of the effectiveness of materials and the successful attainment of their goals by the students.

"Can we cater for the typical ABE student or only for a different, more independent and confident type? Where is 'education' in all this or are we really only talking about 'skills', or factory fodder?"

Coates, S (1988), *Do we know what we mean?*, Good Practice, no 1, p 4. *

Cox, S & Hobson, B (1988), *User appreciation of open learning at Jaguar Cars Ltd*, Open Learning. *

Jaguar's Open Learning Centre offers computer-aided learning and video materials as well as more conventional and tutorial-based materials. All are available during and after working hours. Pre-counselling of clients is a priority of the centre staff to ensure a close match of needs and provision. The evaluation of the program quality is seen as a problem as the clients may have little contact with the course manager. Nevertheless, the facility is highly valued by the company and by those who use it.

Davies, WJK (1989), *Open and Flexible Learning Centres*, Britain. ***

This book provides indispensable reading for anyone involved in or contemplating the establishment of flexible learning facilities. Its main value would be at management levels in that it canvasses a range of issues to be considered in the design and operation of such centres. The most important question to be looked at is the "why" of setting up methods of flexible learning. The answer to this will lead to a careful consideration of the alternatives available in terms of philosophy, funding, space, staff and resources.

"What does the institution hope to **do** - to add on a useful facility that may attract new custom unable to use its existing courses; to embed innovatory techniques within its mainstream work; to provide a focus for changing its staff attitudes? To impress its neighbours ...? Does it want a combination of these?"

Davies takes the reader through a detailed consideration of the funding and costing implications of flexible learning (the only resource we could find that addressed this question deliberately). This is followed by chapters on: staffing resources, accommodation issues, availability and use of materials and media, administration and centre learning management. The appendices add examples of practical means of record keeping and internal organisational models. While this book is easily read, its consideration of the subject is detailed and logical. The range of alternatives and their implications are clear and should provide valuable guidance to any facility, institution or network seeking to offer a viable range of flexible learning modes.

"..... evidence suggests that there are really only two alternative courses for an institution to adopt if it wants to develop flexible learning seriously. Either it keeps the whole matter low key, allowing individual initiatives to grow and develop as chance permits, or it takes the wider concept on board as soon as possible to obtain the long-term planning advantages."

Deku, J, *Course for Low Level Reading and Writing Learners using the ILC Facility*, Interchange, no 18. **

Review of a course blending four-hour class and two-hour individual learning centre, but with the stated purpose of learner independence.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1991), *Consulting Project on the Feasibility of TV Broadcasting of Educational and Training Material*, Report by Open Learning Channel Pty Ltd and Learning Network Pty Ltd. *

Appendix also available giving information about the interviews that were conducted to provide the data for the report.

Section 7: The Use of Educational Television in Support of Australia's Literacy and Language Policy for the 1990s, pages 94-115, while mainly dealing with the uses of television and advanced technology in literacy courses, makes several interesting points about open learning approaches in the literacy field. These relate directly to the definition of "good practice" given in the introduction to this manual.

Section 8: Industrial Training Using a Television Delivery.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1989), *Outcomes of Adult Literacy Programs*, by B Brennan, R Clark & D Dymock. *

Report of a research project commissioned under the Adult Literacy Action Campaign.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1990), *The Language of Australia: Discussion Paper on an Australian Literacy and Language Policy for the 1990s*, Canberra, vol 1. *

Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (1990), *Adult Migrant Education Program: Review of Individual Learning Centres*, by J Hoadley, Melbourne. *

Department of Primary Industries and Energy (1991), *Telecottages: the Potential for Rural Australia*, by D Horner & I Reeve. *

Fisher, V (1992), *An Appraisal of Provision in ABE Open Learning Centres*, RaPAL Bulletin, Britain, no 18. ***

The author suggests that the client group for each of the two operators of open learning centres is quite different. Further education colleges offer help for students who are already literate and are thus interested in extending their existing skills. An adult learning basic skills unit, however, tends to cater for students "with basic learning difficulties", offering support in basic literacy and numeracy skills, communication skills and confidence building. Fisher comments that there is a disturbing lack of regional co-ordination of these centres, resulting in each centre operating as "a single solitary entity".

Gooley, A, Towers S & Dekkers, J (1991), *Queensland Open Learning Network: Removing the Barriers to Learning through a Multi-media delivery infrastructure.* ***

The problems of equity and access to education for a highly decentralised population were tackled by two basic strategies: a network of learning centres linked by communication technologies and the development of a range of courses to be delivered through those centres and post-secondary institutions. Integral to this plan is the sharing of resources and effort across providers and the role of the co-ordinator of each centre in increasing awareness in the community of the education and training opportunities available.

The authors emphasise the use of interactive electronic technologies as adding to the quality of learning rather than making up for the lack of a traditional class. The Open Learning Network sees the opportunities for the delivery of training and education programs for the general community and industry.

Hagan, P, *Where do ILCs fit into Learner Pathways?*, Interchange, no 18. **

Schematic representation of the process of operating an individual learning centre which revolves around curriculum planning. Encourages definition of educational goals and objectives.

Hoadley, J, *Towards Independent Learning: The Role of the Individual Learning Centre*, Interchange, no 18. ***

Jack Hoadley carried out the review of individual learning centres in the Adult Migrant Education Program in 1989-90. This article summarises the findings of the review.

The purpose of the individual learning centre is set out in the Adult Migrant Education Program handbook. The individual learning centres provide opportunities for students to independently pursue learning activities and practise learning skills according to their own requirements, at the times and at a pace of their choice, with the guidance of a teacher.

Effective operation of the individual learning centre was dependent on the interaction between the client and the individual learning centre teacher, the design of the materials and the organisation of those materials for client access. The teacher in the individual learning centre played a pivotal role in helping clients "learn how to learn", as well as introducing them to the organisation of the centre and its materials and the notion of progressive self-assessment.

The recommendations of the review support the role of the individual learning centre as an effective way of "assisting the learner towards learning autonomy."

The full text of the Review of Individual Learning Centres, Final Report February 1990 is also available.

Johnson, R (1992), *Open Learning: Unseen issues*, Australian Training Review, no 4. *

Kelly, M (1987), *The high cost of 'efficiency and effectiveness' in Australia*, Open Learning, vol 2, no 3. *

3. READING LIST AND SYNOPSES

Lander, J, *Producing Materials for Self-Directed Learning: A Checklist*, Interchange, no 18. *

MacNeil, D, *Centre-based approaches to open learning*, unpub. *

Markowitz Jr, H (1987), *Financial decision making - calculating the costs of distance education*, Distance Education, vol 8, no 2. *

Ministry of Education, Division of Further Education (1989), *Adult Literacy and Basic Education into the 1990s*, Victoria, vols 1-2. *

National Board of Employment, Education and Training and Department of Employment, Education and Training (1990), *Open Learning: Policy and Practice*, by R Johnson, Commissioned Report No 4. ***

This paper is a clear and useful documentation and exploration of the notion of open learning and its applications in post- compulsory education. It explores the issues connected with the establishment, funding, resourcing and operation of flexible delivery facilities while looking at the potential advantages and risks of the open approach.

After investigating overseas and Australian examples of open learning, Johnson concludes that the issues of equity and cost effectiveness are driving forces behind the use of an open approach.

"Open learning attempts to ensure that every person has the opportunity to learn what is most appropriate at a given time and in the way that best suits each person ..... also provides counselling and remedial or bridging programs and credit transfer ....."

"Open learning is not intrinsically cheaper nor more expensive than other approaches to education, but it produces better results."

Johnson also maintains that the move to open learning involves central funding authorities in a review of current funding practices of student contact hours, capital investment and the measures of educational success.

Purvis, D, *'It's a Long, Long Way to Autonomy ...'*, Interchange, no 18. **

Discussion of the ideals and the reality of an individual learning centre.

Rumble, G (1987), *Why distance education can be cheaper than conventional education*, Distance Education, vol 8, no 1. *

Seccombe, K & Gray, T, *The Livestock Officer Experience: Competency Learning For Whole Job Training.* *

Training and Development in Australia.

Shipway, A (1989), *Starting from scratch - Workplace ABE in Tasmania*, Good Practice, no 4, pp 8-10. *

State Training Board and Division of Further Education (1992), *Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework Project*, by D Bradshaw, vols 1-3. **

Important background information regarding current work in organising and documenting competencies in the adult basic education area. This framework will form the basis of any future credit transfer scheme for adult basic education clients.

Stocker, M (1990), *An Open Learning Centre inside a Steelworks*, Good Practice, no 8, pp 10-11. *

Turner, M & Lander, J, *Developing a Classification System for Study Centre Materials*, Interchange, no 18. *

Virgona, C, *Peer tutoring: language and literacy training for NESB workers in industry.* *

This research project in two companies addressed the language and literacy problems of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds by the development of a peer tutoring model.

"Initial tutor training was followed by the organisation of tutor groups which met for four hours a week." The award restructure curriculum provided the basis for the work within the groups.

"English language and literacy skills, communication throughout the factory, and the recording of production and quality information were all deemed to have improved as a result of the program."

Western Australia Department of TAFE (1990), *Fleximode: Within Western Australia TAFE*, by D Toussaint. *

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Tom Aumann	Outer Eastern College of TAFE
Bill Bradshaw	Educational Consultant
Judy Brugman	Outer Eastern College of TAFE
Wendy Butcher	Centre for Continuing Education (Wodonga)
Maggie Callingham	Dandenong TAFE - Learning Skills Centre
Kathy Cann	Emerald Community House
Shirley Collins	Dandenong TAFE - Learning Skills Centre
Jane Dewildt	Tallangatta Neighbourhood House/Wodonga TAFE
Janet Di Carlo	Dandenong TAFE - Learning Skills Centre
Sue Fisher	Adult Migrant Education Services (Box Hill)
Pat Jones	Outer Eastern College of TAFE
Hugh Kiernan	Upper Yarra/Healesville Literacy Programs
Phillipa Maclean	Alamein Literacy Program
Del MacNeil	Adult Migrant Education Services (Mitcham)
John Mortimer	Emerald Community House
Denise Oakley	Outer Eastern College of TAFE
Jeremy O'Connor	Adult Migrant Education Services (Myer House)
Phoebe Palmieri	Centre for Flexible Learning
Jan Simmons	Morrison House
Mary Unwin	Donvale Living & Learning Centre
Crina Virgona	Adult Migrant Education Services (Myer House)
Ron Wilson	Broadmeadows TAFE

From Assessment, Referral and Placement Kit for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Programs in Victoria

The Interim Literacy Course Matrix 1992

Adult Basic Education Curriculum Framework	State Recurrent funding at all 4 levels CALP at levels 1 and 2	Labour market programs (Special Intervention)	labour market programs (Jobtrain)
4 Characteristically at this level of the program reading and writing will display more detailed technical knowledge and vocabulary, include more objective and analytical processes and be precisely structured and sustained in length	4.1 Course objectives: To provide an adult literacy and basic education program which will enable students to independently apply skills and strategies in a range of literacies for personal development, employment, the pursuit of further study, vocational education and/or training.	4.2 Course objectives: To provide adult literacy and basic education as a component of a vocational and/or pre vocational learning program	4.3
3 Characteristically at this level of the program reading and writing will display an emergence of some detailed technical knowledge and vocabulary, an ability to develop personal style, increased sophistication in language use as well as greater capacity to sustain longer pieces of work.	3.1 Course objectives: To provide an adult literacy and basic education program which will enable students to consolidate a range of literacies which will lead to independent strategies needed for employment, personal development, the pursuit of further study, vocational education and/or training.	3.2	3.3
2 Characteristically at this level of the program reading and writing will no longer be entirely concrete nor only related to personal experience but starting to show some diversity in organisation and style. This level of literacy is a barrier to participation in vocational training	2.1 Course objectives: To provide an adult literacy learning program which will enable students to begin to apply literacy and language skills and strategies for everyday life and work. Personal social and community development outcomes are central.	2.2 Course objectives: To provide adult literacy and numeracy as a major component of a vocational and/or pre vocational learning program.	2.3 Course objectives: To provide a vocational or pre-vocational course delivered without primary dependence on text and by vocational training staff working in partnership with literacy and numeracy teachers
1 Characteristically at this level of the program reading and writing will be more concrete, related to personal experience or the familiar and will be short and rudimentary in format and style. This level is a barrier to participation in vocational education.	1.1 Course objectives: To provide a learning program for students who are attempting or who are beginning to develop literacy and language skills and strategies for every day life and work. Personal, social and community development outcomes are central.	1.2	1.3
Focus of Courses	primarily literacy focus	mixed vocational & literacy focus	vocational focus & optional literacy support

N.B. For details of the competencies in reading and writing to be achieved by students participating in courses located within this matrix, please refer to the draft competencies of the Victorian Adult Basic Education Accreditation Framework.

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